A Sore Grievance

(No. 3426)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They have forgotten their resting place." Jeremiah 50:6.

THE people of Israel had been so hunted about that they forgot the place where once they rested. The same remark may be made of some congregations. There are Christian people who have the great misfortune of an unchristly pastor. The preaching is eloquent—they are constantly exhorted to do one thing and another. It may be the preaching is intellectual—they are encouraged to speculate upon this and that Doctrine, or it may happen that the preaching is rhetorical, the people are covered with flowers—the preacher seems to be constantly scattering from himself a display of fireworks, an explosion of dazzling words! But there is no manifestation of Christ—no opening up of the completeness of the atoning Sacrifice—no uplifting of Jesus in His love to His people, in His union with them, in the Covenant which He has made on their behalf. Oftentimes have we met with good people who fretted because the ministry failed to supply for their souls. They could have done without the eloquence. They would have been happy without the new theories, however intellectual. They could have survived if there had been less exhortation—what they wanted was a little food to strengthen them, a little repose to invigorate them, a little faith to encourage them in resting upon the finished work of Jesus Christ! Oh, what an account will they have to give who, instead of being shepherds of God's sending to feed His flock with discretion and make them lie down in green pastures, come to them as legal taskmasters wielding the rod, but never using the pastoral staff to guide the flocks by still waters! However, I fear there are some who, though no less worried, nevertheless forget their resting place. Let us talk familiarly with one another on this theme.

What is our resting place, Beloved? We have only one answer, I am sure—"We who have believed have entered into rest," but our rest is in Jesus Christ, Himself. We believed on Him, He took away our burden and we found rest. We bowed our neck to His yoke, became His disciples and we found yet fuller rest unto our souls. Not a particle of rest do we get from ourselves, neither does the world contribute to it, for, "in the world you shall have tribulation." All our rest is found in Him, for He is our peace, who has said, "It is finished," and in that finished work we confidently repose. It is possible for us to forget, however, to enjoy the rest which faith has made it our privilege to possess. And if we do, it is not only a loss to our comfort, but it is a very serious loss to us in all respects. If sheep, under the charge of any, should lose their rest, besides the cruelty to the creatures and the suffering it would involve them, it would be a serious loss to their owner. A sheep does, after it has been fed,

lie down—it must naturally chew the cud. The food it has gathered, it must digest in peace, or else it cannot grow fat. It cannot, in fact, be in health at all. Fancy a field of sheep in which some worrying dog constantly amused himself by hunting them from end to end! They would become lean and valueless. They would ultimately die. We must have rest! It is important, therefore, not partly and in measure, but to the uttermost degree, that when Christ has become our rest, we should continue to enjoy Him and to rest in Him! The sense of such need urges me, at this time, to endeavor to lead you, as God shall help me, to Christ Jesus our rest, by reminding you of some who forget their resting place. If it should happen to come home to your own souls, may you have Grace to escape from the calamity which the text describes!

Three things—here is the first—a sin of which to be convinced. Secondly, the cause of it to be sought out. And thirdly, the cure of it to be brought about. "They have forgotten their resting place."

I. THIS IS TO BE ACCOUNTED A SIN FOR MANY REASONS.

Let us recollect how dearly our resting place was purchased for us. To give your soul rest, my Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ gave up His rest and more—His Heaven, His Throne, His honor, His life. No rest could there ever have beenfor you, a wandering sheep, if the Shepherd had not given up Himself as a ransom for the flock. Did it cost Him Gethsemane's bloody sweat? Did it cost Him Calvary's wounds and death? And did you receive it and yet forget it? Have not you often thought that whatever else might have passed away from your mind, never could the thought of that dying love depart? Yet it has faded on the tablet of your heat, for you have forgotten the priceless gift which that dying love has procured for you! Oh, chide yourself, that Immanuel's purchase should be lightly esteemed, that He, your rest, should ever slip away from your thoughts!

Remember, too, how graciously that rest was given to you. My own remembrances may help yours. I remember well—and did I live to twice the age of Methuselah—I could never forget the time of my wearisome bondage under the Law and under the slavery of sin! Oh, what I would have given, then, to have had rest, to have had my sins pardoned. I dare to say, I think a thousand deaths would have been cheaply endured by me if I might have escaped the wrath to come! My burdened soul chose strangling rather than life because my life had become weariness and even like unto wormwood and gall had the cup of life been embittered. But as in a moment, rest came to my soul by a glance at that Crucified Savior! An act of simple faith exercised upon Christ's Atonement brought me perfect rest! And shall I forget my resting place? I am sure if some prophetic spirit of the future could have whispered in my ear at the time of my conversion, "You will forget your resting place," I would quickly have answered, with Hazael, to the Prophet, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" And I might have said, "Is your servant a devil, that he should ever think of doing such a thing?" "Love so amazing, so Divine"—shall this be cast behind my back? A gift so

precious, brought to me when I deserved it not and just when I most required it—shall it ever be lightly esteemed or carelessly neglected? Oh, memory, let fall what you may, but retain as with an iron grasp, the recollection of that blessed day in which my soul found her resting place!

Beloved, there are other reasons to make this forgetfulness of ours greatly sinful. Remember how sweetly we have enjoyed that rest since then! It was not one day a honeymoon and then ever afterwards Christ and our souls, strangers— oh, no, I speak to some of you who have had many high days and holidays since the time of your conversion! You have feasted upon dying love! That banqueting house of Solomon's Song is a place well known to you—the banner of love that waved over the spouse of old—its silken folds have also waved over you! 'Twas but the other night when some of us were together in prayer and communion with Christ, and we could not help singing—

"My willing soul would stay,
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away,
To everlasting bliss."

Could we have such enjoyments and yet forget them? Such rest in the resting place and yet make light of it? Such peace of God that passes all understanding, and yet be listless about it? Wretch that I am to wander thus in search of vain delights, to leave the flowing fountain for the broken cisterns, which, if they had been whole, had been but stagnant reservoirs, unworthy to be compared to the clear living stream that bursts from the fountain of fellowship with Christ! Let every sweet season of past spiritual enjoyment gently rebuke you, Beloved, if you do at all forget your resting place!

Further, does it not seem strange and marvelous that any of us should forget our resting place when we so greatly need it? Oh, I think I speak for the most of you when I say it is a weary world after all the mercy that God has made to pass before us—it is a weary, weary world! Solomon, with all his wealth, with all the accessories of pleasure, with all the tastes to enjoy them, deliberately said, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." And I am sure it is easy amidst pains and toils, blunders and disappointments, for many of us to utter the same lament. When afflicted in body, distressed with severe labor, or reduced to poverty, we might as well try to find rest on the sea, or on a bed of thorns, or on a bed of flames, as find rest in the things of this world! What weariness of the flesh, what vexation of spirit we endure! Oh, then, why is it we forget our resting place? Men, jaded and faint with the drudgery of labor, are glad to throw themselves upon the bed and fall asleep, and you that have much toil and travail under the sun, will you forget that couch that Christ has brought you, upon which your spirits may take delicious repose? With such need for rest, and such a rest so sweetly proven to be restful in the past, 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing that we should ever forget our resting place!

Since our resting place is so suitable to us, it becomes the more strange that we should forget it. Suitable for a sinner is a finished salvation. Suitable for a warrior is the great shield that covers his head in the day of battle. Suitable for a fugitive is that castle and high tower of our defense which is found in Christ, the Lord's Anointed! "The coney goes toher place in the rocks and the stork has her nest among the fir trees." Oh, you children of God, you have a resting place suitable to your nature—how is it you can forget it? Touch upon the things of nature, how they chide you! Bring to your remembrance the birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, the dumb driven cattle accustomed to the yoke, and let them chide you, for they forget not their resting place! Carried away to the city the other day, the dove was taken from its cage, and they let it loose, fastening to it a message. It mounted aloft, it whirled round a while that it might see where it was. It was far, far away from the dovecot—it was found hundreds of miles away, but where did it fly? Swift as an arrow from the bow, it sought its resting place with infallibility of affection! It found its nearest way to the cot where it had been reared and brought its message safely there. Will you let the pigeon outstrip you in affection for your resting place? Look at the swift-winged dove and be ashamed! And even the dog, which you despise, taken away from its master, carried many miles away, in darkness, too, so that it might not know its way, has been known to swim rivers, cross by-ways it could not have known, and there it is found barking for admission at its master's door—oh, so happy when it heard its master's voice again! It could not rest elsewhere. Oh, my Heart, are you more doggish than a dog? Do you forget your Lord when dogs remember well their masters? Let us learn even from these creatures, I say, and henceforth let us not forget our resting place. As all ingratitude is base, this sin cannot be light or venial. Now, let us ask—

II. WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THE FORGETFULNESS which we sometimes have of Jesus Christ—our heart's dear rest?

How frequently it arises from neglect of thought, a culpable remissness! So busy, up in the morning and at it—the whirl, the noise and clatter of business in the ears—always in the ears, every nerve on the strain, right on till one falls asleep through sheer exhaustion! Oh, our times are hard for deep piety! They are hard and trying times for souls that would walk near to Christ. I know more Grace can match the evil of the times, but still, our Puritan forefathers with their quiet lives, calm and undistracted, with the time they could have for studying the Word of God, and for private prayer—no wonder they outstripped us! I am afraid some Christians neglect the reading of the Word of God—almost as a rule forget it! You don't get your daily text. You don't get your meditation. Ah, Souls, if a thing never comes across the mind, it is not remarkable that you should forget it! If any of you are going on a journey, you don't forget your wives! No, they come often across your thoughts. You may forget some stranger whom you saw but once—you may never think of him again. Were the mind more occupied with Christ, there would be less likelihood of our forgetting Him! You know, when the photographer takes a picture, if he does it rapidly, it may be that,

by-and-by, it will fade. If they want to take a picture that shall be definite, fixed and permanent, they let the sensitive plate continue long exposed to the view, that there may be a good, thoroughly well-fixed impression. I would that my soul had many opportunities of being like a sensitive plate fixed right in front of Jesus to take His portrait thoroughly—to have it so upon my soul that it could never fade away! Oh, to have much more communion with Christ, to contemplate Him with a steady gaze and undi-stracted attention is the way to overcome our present forgetfulness! This is a flimsy age—a superficial age. It has its waves of religious excitement, but they are all on the surface. We have not many of those great ground-swell waves where the ocean of manhood seems to heave up from the very bottom. These are the waves that work wonders for men and glorify God. May we have many such in our own souls!

Another reason why we forget our Savior is our tendency to self-sufficiency. A poor man who has nothing of his own and who lives day-by-day a pensioner upon some rich man's bounty, cannot forget the man who helps him! But if he should forget him this morning, he will be sure to remember him tomorrow morning when he needs bread! And he who receives his money weekly, might forget his friend on the Tuesday, but he will remember him again on the Saturday, when he must go to him again! If we were always sensible as we should be of our absolute dependence on Christ for everything, and going to Him for all, there would be no fear of our memories failing us! But we very soon set up a little independency of our own—poor worms as we are—as a Brother said in prayer the other night, "Dust heaps!" That is all we are, the very best of us—poor "dust heaps." We imagine we are kingdoms and we talk such great things, and think such big things about our experience and our wisdom! Oh, away with it all! We might well not see the sun when we eclipse him with our self-sufficiency! You poor beggarly worm, naked, poor, and miserable, I counsel you to buy of Christ, gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich! And white raiment that you may be clothed! And go to Him again, leaving your self-sufficiency behind you!

With others it is worldliness that keeps them from remembering their dear Savior. They forget their resting place because they are so worldly, grasping after so much. Enough is not enough to them—they must have more. The early rising and the sitting up late are right enough for industry, but wrong enough for avarice—these are the things that keep the soul from Christ—the getting money rightly if you can, but, anyway, the getting of money. A man cannot live for money and yet abide in Christ! When the heart gets the world into it, it eats as does a canker. If you will have the world, you shall have it—but you shall not have Christ! Oh, can you make an exchange of Christ for such poor stuff, for such heavy clay? Keep all the world outside your heart! If you keep all the sea outside the ship, it cannot sink. Is the world inside your heart—a little water there will prove a leak that will sink your vessel—beware of worldliness! Those of you can be worldly that are poor, as well as those that

are rich. You may have cares that worry and devour—and keep you from your Savior. Strive against these! Be not cankered with this canker! Love not the world, or you cannot walk with Jesus! Lay your cares on Him who cares for you—and you will come back to your resting place!

I fear that some Christians forget their resting place through idolatry. "Idolatry?" you ask, "We are not idolaters! We are not, even as the Romanists are, who will worship their crucifixes or their relics." No idolatry? Was not that idolatry this afternoon with that boy of yours? Ah, what a boy! Your heart all but adores him and if he were taken from you, you would feel you could not forgive God! No idolatry? The other day, when you looked upon your fair estate and all the comforts of life with which God had surrounded you, did not you feel your heart go after these things? No idolatry? "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," was once an exhortation of John, and it is also my exhortation to you this evening. We so soon make idols. I am afraid if an idol breaking were to take place tonight, many of you would go home broken-hearted! Or if your idols are at home, you would go home to see them broken, and yourself be ready to despair. There is much idolatry—and if you love son or daughter more than Christ, you are not worthy of Him! If you love husband or wife more than Christ, you are not worthy of Him. Oh, be it so, that they take low seats and Christ sits on the Throne! Go down, Beloved, go down! I love you there as I may and should, but come up, my Savior, take the highest place, for there You must sit King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Once more, I think some genuine Christians forget their resting place for a while through despondency of spirit. It is sometimes hard to remember our sweet rest in Jesus when we get oppressed. I can speak very feelingly here. There are some of us that carry about with us a constitution which elevates us, at times, up to the very heavens of delight—and sinks us down at other periods very, very low. Those who have high tides must expect to have very dry ebbs. If you mount high, you sometimes will fall low and then, when the liver won't act, when the spirits won't move, when the whole heart hangs its harp upon the willows, it is difficult, then, to come and rest in Jesus. And some feel grinding trouble, or a perpetual affliction of body, till at last they get into a chronic state of sadness. Dear Brother, dear Sister, before you get there, make a rally, if you can, to get away from it! It is to be escaped from. After all, Christ died for sinners such as you are. Hang on Him! Cling to Him! Come and wash again in the fountain which is filled with His blood! He loves you! He gives Himself for you! He can never forget you, or cast you away! Come and rejoice in Him, yet again, and lift up your heart once more by simple, confident faith in Him, for, "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." Don't let Satan triumph! Don't let the world laugh because a Christian is in despair! "Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Be gone, you fears! Let the winds take them away.

"Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. His mercy is not clean gone forever. He will be mindful of His Covenant. He will not cast away His people whom He did foreknow."

These are the things that will sometimes bring us into the dilemma of forgetting our resting place. And now to close—

III. WHAT IS THE CURE FOR IT ALL?

I do not know what Charles the First meant when he gave his watch to Bishop Judson and said, "Remember." I do not care what he meant. But let the same be my word to you tonight, "Remember! Remember!" That is the cure for this distemper of the mind, this dereliction of the heart."Remember what?" you ask. Remember first the past—

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

Remember the days of old, the Everlasting Covenant. Remember the sealing of the Covenant with blood upon the accursed tree. Remember the day of your sin, and the day of salvation—your sore bondage and your great deliverance when He brought you out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm—remember this and you will no more forget your resting place!

Remember again the future. You ask, "Can we remember that which has not happened yet?" Let your faith substantiate the promise and see it as though fulfilled, and remember it tonight. You will, before long, be where Jesus is. Your soul, white-robed, shall appear before Him, and your poor body—vile body as it is—shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and you shall shine with the mighty host who day without night magnify the name of Him that is, and was, and is to come! Remember this, and you shall not forget your resting place. "All this comes to you through Him. He has procured it for you and is preparing it for you at this hour."

Remember, also, something about the present What is there that you have, tonight, of all your possessions that can afford you rest? Have the roots of your spirit begun to twist about the earth? Pray to have them unbound, for, otherwise a painful time will come to you. What have you that you could rest upon in the time of death? A Roman Catholic once said that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith was a blessed supper Doctrine—would do to end the day with! But he thought it was a bad breakfast Doctrine to begin the day with. At least there is truth in the first observation—it is a blessed supper Doctrine and Christ makes a blessed supper for us in life's end. There is no supper in life's end—no supper that the soul can eat—but Jesus Christ, who shall give her satisfaction and contentment as she goes forth on her long journey! Well, as you have nothing that can satisfy you in dying, why do you try to satisfy yourself with it now? Have you been making an idol? Have you? Let it go! Forget not your resting place, I pray you. Look at your friend's house and read, "mortal"

written there! Look in your child's face and know that before long your last act of kindness for that child will be to find a narrow home in the silent grave. What? Are you immortal and seeking to live upon mortal food? You, eternal as God's life, and yet seeking to satisfy yourself with the worm's meat that springs out of earth, and goes back again to it! Shame on you! When Christ gives you rest, and is All-in-All to you, turn not away from the everything to try and fill yourself with the nothing!

Lastly remember, and this last remembrance will be a blessed cure—remember Christ Himself. For this purpose come to His Table. Though you have, for a while, forgotten your resting place, He says, "This do you in remembrance of Me." Come and remember Him again—

"Gethsemane can I forget? Or there Your conflict see? Your agony and bloody sweat, And not remember Thee? When to the Cross I turn my eyes, And rest on Calvary,

Lamb of God, my Sacrifice,

1 must, I must remember Thee."

So may it be with you now!

There may be, however, in this congregation—no, I know there are some who have never yet enjoyed rest. They are going about to find it. Dear Hearer, there is only one resting place—don't look for another! Your works will never provide you rest. Sacraments can never rest you. Tears and groans, and prayers can never rest you. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." "Believe in Him and live!" Trust in Him and you shall find rest unto your soul forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JEREMIAH 3:6-25; 4:1-29.

Let us read part of the 3rd Chapter of Jeremiah where God brings a solemn accusation against the two nations of Israel and Judah because they forsook the living God and went after idols—neglected His pure and holy worship—and followed after the abominable rites of the heathen.

Verse 6, 7. The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot Yet I said, after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me. Depth of mercy that God should bid such a polluted one return to Him! "Yet I said, after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me."

7, 8. But she returnednot. Andher treacherous sister Judah saw it AndIsaw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. Some cannot be kept back from sin by the punishment of others, but they run into the fire in which others have been burnt, and so they aggravate their sin.

9. And it came to past through the lightness of her whoredom that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with wood.That is to say, she gave her heart to

false gods and worshipped stones and wood. And how it must anger the living God to see men turn away from Him to worship blocks of wood and stone, instead of Him, and especially a people who have been instructed concerning the living God, and so commit the grossest act of disloyalty to Him, and are rebellious to the last degree.

10, 11. And for this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly says the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah. The one sinned openly and persevered in it. The other pretended to repent and did not, and that pretended repentance was more hateful in the sight of God than even the daring and open sin of Israel. What next?

12. Go and proclaim these words towards the north and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the LORD. And I willnot cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the LORD, andI will not stay angry forever The offense was foul. It is such a one as stabs at the heart of man's honor. It is an offense which a man will scarcely ever forgive. But God bids His wandering Israel come back! And He proclaims mercy—free mercy—even to such gross transgressors!

13. Only acknowledge your iniquity. It is all He asks you to do. Confess that you have done wrong. "Only acknowledge your iniquity."

13. That you have transgressed against the Lord, your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the LORD. It was under the trees that they set up their altars to worship there false gods, so that they turned the graves, which should be full of beauty and sweet with song, into the places of idolatry, whereby God was provoked. But He says, "Only confess it. Come and lament it. Acknowledge that you have been guilty, and I will put away the sin."

14-16. Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD: for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you pastors according to My heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, neither shall it come to mind neither shall they remember it Neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done anymore. Evangelical repentance, when it brings pardon with it, usually puts a slight upon mere legal ceremonies. We need not the symbol when we get the substance! We need no Ark of the Covenant nor holy place at Jerusalem when once the Lord appears in plenteous Grace to put away our sin!

17, 18. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; andall the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk anymore after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel. Nothing unites people like the Grace of God. Two men that have been pardoned by the same Savior ought to love one another, and they will!

18, 19. And they shall come together out of the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said After all this mercy, He seems to come to a pause, "But I said"—

19, How shall I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant and a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? Is it possible? Can it be done? These harlot nations that have defiled and polluted themselves with unutterable filthi-ness—can they be put among the children—the children of God?

19-22. And I said, You shall call Me, my Father, and shall not turn away from Me. Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the LORD. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and theyhave forgotten the LORD their God. Return you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Do you hear it? Do you hear God's promise? Do you hear His command? "Return, you backsliding children. I will heal your backslid-ings." Now for the answer. God grant that it may well up in your hearts.

22, 23. Behold, we come unto You, for You are the LORD our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains. We leave all false confidences. We forsake our earthly joys.

23, 24. Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel For shame has devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. They have not profited by worshipping idols. They have suffered through it.

25. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth, even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God. There you see the repentance which the Lord commanded at His people's hands, and wherever there is such a repentance as that, there are sure to be acceptance and salvation! God grant us that repentance and save us for His mercy's sake!

JEREMIAH 4:1-29.

Verses 1, 2. If you will return, O Israel, says the LORD, return unto Me, and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then shall you not be moved. And you shall swear, The LORD lives, in truth, in judgment and in righteousness. And the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory. So he sets before them life and death. First, He begins with these words of encouragement. He begs them to come, for God is willing to receive them, notwithstanding all.

3, 4. For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil ofyour doings. They had the outward religion, but the Lord's servant bids them know that they must have

heartreligion. The heart must be purged—the inward must be cleansed. This they had no mind to. They would multiply their sacrifices and their outward performances, but as to cleanliness of heart, this they cared not for.

5-7. Declare you in Judah, andpublish in Jerusalem and say, Blow you the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves andlet us go into the fortified cities. Set up the standard towards Zion, retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north and a great destruction. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make your land desolate; and your cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant This was a terrible prophecy. The Chaldeans, who had broken to pieces so many other kingdoms and powers, were on their way! The enraged lion had leaped from his thicket and was about to tear, and rend, and do universal havoc! And if they did not turn to God, their whole land would be laid waste. One would think that such a heavy blow would have awakened them to a sense of their danger and their sin, but, alas, it was not so!

8, 9. For this girdyou with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us. And it shall come to pass at that day, says the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the Prophets shall wonder. Universal fear would take hold upon them. If they would not rightly fear the Lord and turn to Him, the time would come when, without exception, the greatest and the wisest of them should be taken with a sudden panic!

10. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, You shall have peace; whereas the sword reaches unto the soul. God promised them peace, but it was upon a condition which they did not fulfill. There was peace while they gave up their sin, but, "There is no peace with God unto the wicked." And so they missed it.

11, 12. At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of My people, not to fan, nor to cleanse. Even a full wind from those places shall come unto Me: now also will'I give sentence against them. What an awful line that is. "Now also will I give sentence against them." They had been on their trial. They are found guilty. They will not repent. "Now will I proceed to pronounce their doom and give sentence against them."

13. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us!For we are spoiled. They began to cry out when they began to smart. And the Prophet comes in, again.

14. O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. There is always that silver bell of mercy ringing out the note of invitation! "O Jerusalem, your sorrows, your destruction may yet be averted if you will turn from your darkness! Wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved."

14-18. How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you? For a voice declares from Dan, and publishes affliction from Mount Ephraim. Make you mention to the nations: behold, publish against Jerusalem that watchers come from a far country and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. As keepers of a field, are they against her round about because she has been rebellious against Me, says the LORD. Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you. This is your wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reaches unto your heart. When "great judgments are abroad," it is always on account of great sin. It was so in the case of Israel. "Your doings have procured these things unto you." Oh, when the ungodly man begins to reap the result of his life—when, in his own body and in his own home, he begins to see what sin will often bring the drunkard, let him hear these words—"This is your wickedness. Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you."

Now follows the lament of Jeremiah—one of the most amazing pieces of sorrowful writing that will ever be read in your hearing!

19-21. O my soul, my soul! I am pained at my very heart; my heart makes a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace because you have heard, O, my soul, the sound ofthe trumpet, the alarm of war! Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard and hear the sound ofthe trumpet? The dreadful blast of war, the blood-red flag of murder flying through the land while the Chaldeans slew right and left, young and old—we need to put ourselves into Jeremiah's position to be able to realize the horror of this case.

22, 23. For My people are foolish, they have not known Me. They are silly children, and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void: and the heavens, and they had no light. As if they had gone back to chaos—to the primeval darkness—to the first disorder before God began to create.

24-29. Ibeheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. Ibeheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds ofthe heavens were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness and all the cities thereof were broken down at the Presence ofthe LORD, and by His fierce anger. For thus has the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, because I have spoken it, I have purposed it and I will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. The whole city shall flee from the noise ofthe horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up upon the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein. Now all this did happen. It all came to pass. Palestine, the glorious Garden of God, was made as dreary as a wilderness! It is not much better now. It has scarcely recovered. God will re-gather them to the land one day, but oh, what a sight it was when God at last had ended His patience—poured out the vials of His wrath upon His once favored land!